

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7655

INFO PANCANAL

USCINCSO

AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 3174

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, PN

SUBJECT: ABORTIVE TERRORIST PLOT: EDITORIAL OPINION AND PUBLIC
UTILITY OF IT

REF: PANAMA 3072

SUMMARY: MAY 3 "CRITICA" EDITORIAL LAYS PLOT RESPONSIBILITY
TO EXILED PANAMANIAN POLITICIANS IN MIAMI, INFERS PLOT MAY
HAVE BEEN FURTHERED BY CONVERSATION LAST YEAR BETWEEN
FORMER PRESIDENT ARNULFO ARIAS AND FORMER GOVERNOR RONALD
REAGAN, AND CONDEMNS BOTH FACTORS AS ANTITHETICAL TO PANA-
MANIAN PEOPLE'S DESIRES. PLOT MAY BE MORE USEFUL THAN
DANGEROUS TO GOP. END SUMMARY.

1. INDICATIONS REPORTED REFTEL THAT "OPERATION PADRE
GALLEGO" (ABORTED TERRORIST PLOT OF LAST WEEK TO EMBARRASS
THE GOP) WAS LINKED TO EXILED PANAMANIAN POLITICAINS IN
MIAMI--PARTICULARLY TO ARNULFO ARIAS--WERE CONFIRMED IN
EDITORIAL OF MAY 3 PRO-GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER "CRITICA".

2. EDITORIAL STATED: "THE PLAN, IN GESTATION IN MIAMI

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SINCE FEBRUARY, CAME TO FRUITION AS THE CLAN OF PANA-

MANIANS, CUBANS, AND AMERICANS WHO REACTIVATED IT AFTER THE INTERVIEW OF ARNULFO ARIAS WITH RONALD REAGAN, AND THE LATTER'S SUBSEQUENT DECLARATIONS AGAINST PANAMA, HAD FORESEEN." (COMMENT: "REACTIVATED" SEEMS AN ANACHRONISM SINCE REAGAN AND ARIAS MET LAST YEAR. EMBASSY CONSIDERS THAT MENTION OF THAT VISIT IN THIS CONNECTION IS A GRATUITOUS AND FALSE ONE.)

3. EDITORIAL DENOUNCED THIS ATTEMPT TO WEAKEN AND OVERTHROW THE TORRIOS GOVERNMENT, AND LABELLED AS TRAITORS THE PANAMANIANS OF THE MIAMI "ANTIIPATRIA" WHO WOULD HAVE FAVORED THE "SOFT TREATY" THAT ARNULFO ARIAS WAS SAID TO HAVE OFFERED REAGAN AT THEIR BOCA RATON MEETING.

4. EDITORIAL ENDED WITH ACCLAMATION OF GOP'S AUTHENTIC POPULAR SUPPORT, UANAMOUS ON TREATY ISSUE, WHICH ENSURED PLOT'S FAILURE, AND WITH A QUOTATION FROM TORRIOS ON HIS DETERMINATION TO SIGN NOT ANY TREATY, BUT THAT TREATY WHICH CAN "HONORABLY BE PRESENTED FOR RATIFICATION BY THE CONSTITUTIONAL PLEBISCITE".

5. TO DATE, NO OTHER NEWSPAPER HAS PROVIDED EDITORIAL COMMENT ON THE PLOT, ITS CONSPIRATORS, OR ITS OBJECTIVES.

6. COMMENT: THIS EDITORIAL ISNOT AN OFFICIAL GOP DECLARATION ON THE PLOT, BUT IT ALMOST SURELY REFLECTS OFFICIAL THINKING ON IT, AND SUGGESTS AS WELL HOW THE GOP WANTS THE PLOT ACTION TO BE ASSESSED BY ITS PUBLIC. THE EDITORIAL HAS LAID RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS ATTEMPTED TERRORIST PLOT AT THE DOOR OF ARNULFO ARIAS AND HIS CONFRERES IN MIAMI. THAT PANAMANIANS IN MIAMI HAD A HAND IN PLANNING AND FINANCING THIS RATHER BIZARRE OPERATION IS A STRONG SUPPOSITION BASED ON THE EVIDENCE PRODUCED HERE--EVEN WITH A JAUNDICED REGARD FOR THAT EVIDENCE.

7. OF MORE MOMENT IS THE PROPAGANDA BENEFIT THIS PLOT MAY HAVE FOR THE GOP. THE GOVERNMENT ALLEGED IN JANUARY 1976 THAT IT WAS IN POSSESSION OF EVIDENCE CONFIDENTIAL

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OF PLOTS AGAINST IT. IT FURTHER ASSERTED THAT PLOTTING WAS IN SOME WAY RELATED TO THE CONFRONTATION BETWEEN IT AND PORTIONS OF THE LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY, AND HENCE THAT EXILE OF SOME MEMBERS OF LATTER ON JANUARY 20 WAS JUSTIFIED. THOSE CHARGES, IN THE MAIN, LAY DORMANT UNTIL LAST WEEK. ONE ITEM IN THE PRESS COVERAGE ON "OPERATION PADRE GALLEGOS" IMPLIED THAT PRESENCE OF BOTH MULLER AND

RUBEN DARIO CARLES IN HONDURAS WAS NOT FORTUITOUS.
(IT HAS BEEN APPARENT THAT GOP DOES NOT INTEND TO LET
CARLES BACK INTO THE COUNTRY IN THE NEAR FUTURE--
WHICH MAY NOW BE LONGER THAN BEFORE.) BUT GOP HAS
NOT ENLARGED THE IMPLICATION OF PLOTTING TO INCLUDE
OTHER MEMBERS OF THE JANUARY EXILES, OR THEIR SUPPORTERS.
WE BELIEVE IT UNLIKELY THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL DO SO.

8. INDEED, GOP HAS NOT MADE A CAUSE CELEBRE OUT OF
THIS PLOT, HAS NOT ACCUSED ANY DOMESTIC CLASS OR GROUP
OF COMPLICITY IN IT, AND HAS BEEN CAREFUL NOT TO
ALLEGGE ANY LINK BETWEEN PLOT AND USG, OR ANY OF ITS
AGENCIES. ONE GOOD REASON FOR SUCH PRUDENCE MAY BE,
AS MENTIONED IN REFTEL, THAT GOP WAS VERY WELL CLUED
IN ON PLAN AND ITS DETAILS.

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